

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074

MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

Ranking Member Cori Bush

Opening Statement

“ATF’s Assault on the Second Amendment: When is Enough Enough?”

March 23, 2023

St. Louis and I are here today to talk about the extraordinary gun violence epidemic in this country. In St. Louis and nationwide, gun violence is a public health emergency, and commonsense regulations are a necessity.

As a survivor of gun violence, I know first-hand the urgency of this issue. When I was in my early 20’s, I found myself in a relationship with an abusive partner. He had guns. He kept one in the kitchen cabinet and another in between our pillows at night when we slept.

One day, my abuser did not approve of the way I was cooking food. He got upset and began to hit me. I ran out the back door, and as I ran, I remember thinking to myself – why isn’t he chasing me? Where is he? Next thing I knew, I heard gunshots. Gunshots aimed at me.

My experience is not an anomaly. It is one too many survivors of gun violence know all too well. I survived that harrowing and traumatic experience but many others have not.

Just five months ago, a shooter opened fire on students and teachers at the Central Visual and Performing Arts High School in St. Louis, a predominantly Black school. Two people were killed, seven were injured, and the entire CVPA and Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience community was traumatized.

Like so many shootings, this one could have been prevented. The shooter failed an FBI background check and his own mother had concerns but his gun was unable to be confiscated because Republican, anti-gun safety lawmakers refused to enact a red flag law in Missouri.

Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for children and teenagers in the United States, with Black children eight times more likely to die from firearms than white children. [Two-thirds](#) of intimate partner homicides in the United States are committed with a gun, and 80 percent of intimate partner firearm homicide victims are women. Nearly 80 percent of homicides are committed with a firearm. And this year, we have already had more than [100](#) mass shootings. It’s only March.

The cause of these statistics is obvious. This country has more guns than people. There are approximately [400 million](#) privately-owned firearms in the United States, which has a population of 332 million. The U.S. is home to nearly [half](#) of the world’s civilian firearms.

But for many Republicans, this is not enough. Students being murdered at their desks is not enough for them to choose to value lives over their toys. Republicans want the U.S. to have an even higher share of the world’s gun supply. They don’t want commonsense regulations on gun ownership; their perverted view of the Second Amendment compels them to argue against reasonable restrictions, and against saving lives.

Republicans' refusal to accept commonsense regulations is why we're sitting here today, as killing machines flood rural and urban communities and slaughter our children. They want to pretend that regulating ghost guns is an assault on our liberties. They want to pretend that regulating stabilizing braces intended to convert a pistol into a short-barreled rifle is trampling on our freedoms. They want to pretend that Democrats are "coming for people's guns."

But let's be clear. Republicans want to pretend that people who support gun safety measures are coming for everyone's guns. We're not. We're coming for the end to gun violence. We're coming for the end of this public health crisis. We're coming for the end of a society where the number of guns exceeds the number of people. We're coming for the end of weak gun laws that allow people to buy an assault rifle and kill and traumatize school children, traumatize teachers, traumatize grocery patrons. That's what we're coming for, and it doesn't require taking away people's right to bear arms.

Our work is about saving people's lives. We will not succumb to the nihilist, insurrectionist view of the Second Amendment. We will not allow the apologists for gun violence to win. We will double down on a public health response to the public health emergency that is gun violence in our country and, together, we will end this crisis once and for all.

I now yield to the gentlelady from Texas, Ranking Member Sheila Jackson Lee.

###
